The Tawny Lion Pawing To Get Free:

A Study of Milton's Christology

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Contents

Abbreviations

AL
: _Artis Logicæ_. Volume 11 of _The Works of John Milton_, Columbia edition.

Areop.
: _Areopagitica_. Volume 2 of _Complete Prose Works_, pp. 485-570.

CD
: _Christian Doctrine_, Book I. Volume 6 of _Complete Prose Works_, tr. by John Carey.

CD, Book II
: _Christian Doctrine_, Book II. As above.

De Doc.
: _De Doctrina Christiana_, Book I. Volumes 14-16 of _The Works of John Milton_. Latin text only. All English translations are mine.

Of Education
: _Of Education_. Volume 2 of _Complete Prose Works_, pp. 361-415.

PL
: _Paradise Lost_. Merritt Y. Hughes' edition.

Tetra.
: _Tetrachordon_. Volume 2 of _Complete Prose Works_, pp. 577-718.

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In one of its many forms the central question on which John

Milton's De Doctrina Christiana turns is that raised by Christ to

his disciples when he asked them, "But whom say ye that I am?"

(Matt. 16:15). Although theology is the preoccupation of the

present essay, the relationship between the theological and poetic

answers is a complex, thorny, and interesting problem on which

I intend to make occasional observations. Nor is the lengthy

theological answer itself simple, since in order to formulate a

Christology adequate to this primal question of identity, Milton

reached back to the prior problem of the relation between the Son

and the Father and forward through the life of the incarnate Word

to the concerns of man with the heavenly Paraclete. Though the

theological form would not have permitted the epic design I have

just suggested, nevertheless it is of the first importance to

keep in our minds the very real and immediate question asked by

Christ to his followers while we attempt to follow the often

labyrinthine path of Milton's argument. Such presence of mind is

necessary in order to answer Arthur Barker's important question:

Barker, 168. "How were the formulae of theology thus animated for him?"

CD, Epistle, 122.   Milton called his work "my dearest and best possession."
Note 2.

Though we may not cherish it that much, we do well to take it

seriously, which means, among other things, that we must try

to conform ourselves as far as possible to his intended audience of "mature, strong-minded men who thoroughly understand the teaching of the Gospel." No skipping over those dense paragraphs of proof-texts is permitted, since they are at the heart and not the periphery of his work:

> Most authors who have dealt with this subject
> at the greatest length in the past have been in
> the habit of filling their pages almost entirely
> with expositions of their own ideas. They have
> relegated to the margin, with brief reference to
> chapter and verse, the scriptural texts upon which
> all that they teach is utterly dependent. I, on
> the other hand, have striven to cram my pages
> even to overflowing, with quotations drawn from
> all parts of the Bible and to leave as little
> space as possible for my own words, even when
> they arise from the putting together of actual
> scriptural texts.

As I intend to show from time to time, Milton used biblical quotations as subtle and powerful tools not so much to prove points as to make them. Everything that this theologian says about his treatise leads us back to its scriptural core and his scrupulous attention to it. The intimacy of this bond between the Bible and De Doctrina has some very profound and often ignored consequences.

Milton unambiguously sets out his view of the clarity and simplicity of scripture, "especially in matters of faith and holiness," wherein it is sufficient. The troublesome corruptions of the external document, which has strangely been entrusted to "wayward and uncertain guardians," are to be referred to the internal scripture "written in the hearts of the believers through

CD, XXVII, 521.
CD, XXX, 588.

CD, XXX, 581.

cp. MacCallum.

the Holy Spirit," which cannot be corrupted. The supreme internal authority is tested not only by Milton's uncompromising intellectual honesty, but also by his exegetical principle that "each passage of scripture has only a single sense," though that single sense may have different intensities of meaning or degrees of restriction, and he does allow the essential typology of Old Testament passages. These conservative limits he places on the use of types and the authority of metaphor in the theological context are not to be denied, but the intimacy of association which the parabolic language of scripture and the inherent ambiguity of the very words which scripture sanctions create a tension which both complicates the argument and gives it a tendency, impossible to actualize in this kind of expression, to return to the poetic form of the parable on which it so thoroughly depends. It is in this sense that I would like to suggest that De Doctrina is a working paper and not a complete and systematic theology, and in this way that the difficult relationship between the treatise and his great epic poem can be most fruitfully explored.

Our subject is, of course, Milton's Christology, but a more general position with regards to the whole work which surrounds it seems in order. That we view De Doctrina as incomplete does not presume that it is unfinished or not a unity, and so when difficulties arise in following the argument (the going does get rough), it is best to determine first if the problem does not lie in the nature of what Milton tried to do in the context

in which he tried to do it, rather than to presume a muddled
inconsistency, the error of an amanuensis, or any other such shift.

So much for the internal difficulties. Almost as soon as the
De Doctrina appeared from its obscurity in 1824, charges of heresy
and theological obliquity began to obscure a critical understanding
of the work, which confusion has unfortunately not been entirely
outgrown. Especially persistent has been the charge that Milton

Cp. Tobin, 42 n.1. was an Arian. Those who have thought so seem not to have paid
close enough attention to what Milton said about heresy in his
introductory Epistle:

> For my own part, I devote my attention to the
> Holy Scriptures alone. I follow no other heresy
> or sect. I had not even studied any of the so-
> called heretical writers, when the blunders of
> those who are styled orthodox and their unthink-
> ing distortions of the sense of scripture, first
> taught me to agree with their opponents _whenever_
> _these_ _agreed_ _with_ _the_ _Bible_.

CD, Epistle, 123, my
italics.

For Milton, without the total freedom "not only to sift and
winnow any doctrine, but also openly to give their opinions of

CD, Epistle, 122. it and even to write about it, according to what each believes,"

CD, Epistle, 123. men would have "no religion and no gospel" and would be enslaved

CD, Epistle, 123. "by human law, or rather, to be more exact, by an inhuman tyranny."
Those who would bestow the indivious titles of "heretic" to the
man or "heresy" to his work clearly represented for him the
irrational bigotry and anti-intellectualism of the enslaved mind.

The situation for us may be less polemical than it was for
Milton, but the basic problem remains the same. The question of

whether or not Milton was an Arian is very uninteresting, and it

obscures the far more significant one of how Milton recapitulated

in his own development that which took place in the earliest

centuries of Christianity, when the first few generations of

Christians attempted to answer that question, "whom say ye that

I am?" Milton and Arius seem similar in some ways because they are

(both) related (quite) separately to the same process of working out

in the "process of speech" the meaning of Christianity's pivotal

event. I have found it useful, therefore, to examine briefly the

theological history of this early period in an attempt to clarify

the larger context of ideas into which the arguments of <u>De Doctrina</u>

fit. Neither space nor time have permitted the necessary task to

be performed, of relating Milton's theology so perceived to the

theology of his time. His explicit intention of "restoring

religion to something of its pure original state," his independence

of "the belief and judgment of others," and his dissatisfaction

with the dishonesty and prejudice he found in contemporary volumes

of divinity, perhaps provide reasons to regard this omission with

less severity.

The starting point for an examination of Milton's Christology

is that bulky chapter, "Of the Son of God," the importance of

which is indicated by its having attached the only preface in

the whole work, in which we are warned of the difficulty of the

material and the potential for misunderstanding. Most of this

chapter is taken up with the question of the relation between

the Son of God and God the Father. It is necessary, therefore, first to take a brief look at what Milton means by "God" in the prior chapter devoted to that subject.

The knowledge of God, Milton says, "must be understood in terms of man's limited powers of comprehension. God, as he really is, is far beyond man's imagination, let alone his understanding."

CD, II, 133.

God cannot directly be known; in other words, he cannot be objectified, except in dogmatics through an accommodation to finite human capacity provided by the image of God set up in scripture. For Milton, this image is to be taken exactly as found there: "God, then, has disclosed just such an idea of himself to our understanding as he wishes us to possess."

CD, II, 136.

Figurative interpretations of this "single sense" carry us "beyond the reach of human comprehension, and outside the written authority of scripture, into vague subtleties of speculation," in an attempt to reach a hidden meaning or esoteric doctrine. Milton steadfastly rejects that false kind of mystery and urges the reader to rest on the verbal images of scripture

CD, II, 133-4.

MacCallum, 401-3.

itself. For the student of Christology, the importance of this mediating image, which consists principally of the divine attributes, is that it points toward the incarnate Son as man's sole means of reconciliation with or knowledge of God.

The attributes consist mostly of denials: _im_mense, _in_finite, _e_ternal, _im_mutable, and _in_corruptible. Depth of meaning comes through the proof-texts which Milton cites. The first attribute is,

"that he is the TRUE GOD;" in the biblical context, he is "the
only true God" (John 17:3), which implies the false god and suggests
the anathema of polytheism with which any conception of a Christ
separate from God but equally divine would have to answer. The
second attribute is "that God in his most simple nature is a
SPIRIT;" his proof-text defines spirit by what it is not: "a
spirit does not have flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39), which, by its
context, is to say, a spirit is that which cannot be crucified,
implying the absolute necessity for the incarnate Christ to
effect a reconciliation between God and the world. The other
attributes of Milton's God, when viewed through cited scripture,
continue to enlarge upon this image of an immense and infinite
gulf between God and fallen man, of God's irresistible strength
and man's inescapable weakness, of the endurance of the heavenly
kingdom and the evanescence of any earthly monument, of the
omnipresence of God and the guilt of shame-ridden man who would
try to hide from him. All eight of the attributes showing God's
nature come to summation in his unity, utter and complete, the
importance of which continues to reverberate throughout Milton's
discussion of the Son, in that a God who is one cannot share his
essence with anyone. To that point we shall shortly return.

A good way to start an examination of Milton's Son of God
is with the formidable set of theological terms which serve to
explicate the relation of Father to Son. It is difficult to
understand the significance of Milton's use of the terms, however,

without first acquiring some notion of how they were used in early Christian theology.

According to Jaroslav Pelikan, this problem of "the relation of the divine in Christ to the divine in the Father" was not only historically prior to but more fundamental than "the relation of the divine in Christ to his earthly life." Pelikan cites earliest Christian literature and pagan observations contemporary to it to show that from the first Christ was regarded as a god, but that between the primitive belief and the doctrine of the Trinity and the dogma of the person of Christ, centuries of controversy intervened. This period of ferment is the age with which I find it useful to identify Milton's treatise.

The chief Gnostic and pagan difficulty with early Christianity was a strikingly tenacious objection which crystallized around the teachings of Arius, that God had become a suffering man. Apparently, the Arians solved this difficulty for themselves by defining Christ as a creature, severed from the divinity of an absolutely transcendent Godhead that did not share the principle of creation nor its ousia (being, essence) with anyone, including the "Son". This position was anathematized (and perhaps in part defined) at Constantine's Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325), which declared the Father and the Son to be homoousios (coessential). In the Western Church, ousia was translated by Latin substantia (substance) and essentia (essence), so that at this early period all three came to represent a shared essence of the Godhead,

Pelikan, 175.

Pelikan, 173-4.

Pelikan, 193-8.
Schaff, s.v. "Arianism".

MacMullen, 159-79.
Note 4.

in which the attributes of divinity inhere. The Greek term

hypostasis (etymologically identical to sub-stantia) was identified

at Nicaea with ousia, and hence in the West with substantia, but it

quickly developed to represent that which differentiates the

members of the Godhead, and was so translated by Latin persona

M. Kelly, 140-1 n. 30.
Hunter, "Further
Definitions."
(person).

In the orthodox writings, therefore, it is usual to find the

Godhead defined as consisting of one ousia, essentia, or

Patrides, "Milton
on the Trinity."
substantia, and three hypostases or personae. As an example of

such a trinitarian formula, the Athanasian Creed provides us with

a useful means of illuminating Milton's theology by contrast:

> Now this is the Catholic faith, that we worship
> one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity, without
> either confusing the persons or dividing the sub-
> stance. For the Father's person is one, the Son's
> another, the Holy Spirit's another; but the God-
> head of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
> is one, their glory is equal, their majesty
> coeternal.

J.N.D. Kelly, 17-18.

The Arian heresy is clearly implied by "dividing the substance"

and elseⒸwhere throughout the Creed; historically this heresy,

together with similar theological positions, has become known

Hamell, s.v.
Note 5.
as "Subordinationism" (the Son being subordinated to the Father).

The other heresy alluded to here, in the phrase "confusing the

persons," is the polar opposite of Arianism, known as Sabellianism

Hamell, s.v.
or, more generally, "Monarchism," in which the distinctions are

either weak or dissolved entirely. Though the orthodox Athanasian

statement appears to be equidistant from the two extremes, it is

JND Kelly, 76-80. quite clear which heresy was more troublesome. If we return to
the theological terminology, we can see that the orthodox
Godhead of one substance or essence undivided, in which the
attributes of divinity inhere, and three persons however unconfused,
is far more a monarchy than a hierarchy. What is <u>essential</u> about
this Godhead is what is shared among the three persons, not what
makes each distinct. The persistence of this monarchian strain
throughout Christian doctrine is reflected historically in the
fact that "men have frequently been condemned for denying the
deity of Christ but rarely for denying distinction between the
Father and the Son. To deny the former has generally seemed

McGiffert, in
Pelikan, 182. unchristian; to deny the latter only unintelligent."

    Though Milton recognized and defined each of the three
persons of the orthodox creed, the term "trinity," because of
its bias, must be avoided in any discussion of Milton's Father,
Son, and Holy Spirit. First of all, as he points out, the

CD,V̄,221;
CD,V̄Ī,297-8. scriptural basis for this doctrine is very weak indeed.
Furthermore, scripture is quite unspecific about the nature of
the Holy Spirit, which ghostly being, he concludes, is "a
minister of God, and therefore a creature" inferior to the Son,
who is not a creature; "the brightness of God's glory and the
image of his divine subsistence are said to have been impressed

CD,V̄Ī,298. on the Son but not on the Holy Spirit." For present purposes as
well as for <u>De Doctrina</u> as a whole, the crucial relationship
is between the Father and the Son, and on that structure

depends Milton's conception of the Incarnation and hence of the mediatorial ministry of Christ.

The Athanasian position asserts that "while the Godhead has three persons, i.e. three forms of presentation, it is one and the same Godhead which is exhibited in each, the divine substance

J.N.D. Kelly, 74.

or essence being absolutely indivisible." For Milton, however, substance and essence are not synonymous; he assigns essence to a principle of individuation or hypostasis rather than equating it with a common substrate. Milton's God is essentially his unique hypostasis: "it is quite impossible for any entity to share its essence with anything else whatsoever, for it is by virtue of its essence that it is what it is, and is distinguished

CD, V, 225.

numerically from everything else." "God is one being, not two.

CD, V, 212.

One being has one essence." In the Artis Logicæ, Milton argues that,

> number, as Scaliger rightly says, is an
> affection following an essence. Therefore, things
> which differ in number also differ in essence;
> and never do they differ in number if not in

AL T, vii, 59.

> essence.--Here let the theologians awake.

What the theologians must awake to is what Milton means by that

CD, II, 146.

focal attribute of God, that he is ONE. Here the theologian echoes Christ's prime commandment: "Hear, Israel, the Lord our

CD, II, 148.

God is one Lord" (Mark 12:29, from Deut. 6:4). Now, the meaning of "one" depends radically on the context. For Milton's theology, "one" has its divine significance. The Godhead cannot contain more than one hypostasis because God cannot be objectified,

which is what the poet means when in <u>Paradise Lost</u> he has God speak of himself:

<div style="text-align:center">
who am alone
From all Eternity, for none I know
Second to me or like, equal much less.
</div>

God is all-one, for whom no other one can stand in relation of subject to object, without that profound dislocation of mind attendant on apostasy. God is "through all numbers absolute, though One," in which context Milton agrees with a Mediaeval definition of that number, "radix universi numeri et extra numerum." On the unfallen human level, man is "in unity defective," the one who learns to count up to one by a discipline of obedience:

<div style="text-align:center">
O Adam, one Almighty is, from whom
All things proceed, and up to him return.
</div>

Depraved from good by the Fall, man's approach to "the Holy One of Heav'n" is expressed as the gathering together of widely scattered fragments, "to unite those dissever'd peeces which are yet wanting to the body of Truth." On the demonic level, "one" means one alienated, dividual being among many others; by his apostasy, Satan objectified the Holy One into one powerful tyrant opposed by a mighty Adversary.

Attempting to discuss the God who is wholly one by means of a grammar of subjects and objects and with a language from which metaphor is all but excluded leads to considerable difficulties. Most of the trouble centres on the relationship between God's

hypostasis, substance, and his real being, termed his

subsistentia (subsistence) or his substantial essence. The one

hypostasis of the Father, the "most perfect essence by which God

CD, II, 141. exists from himself, in himself, and through himself," is "not the

CD, II, 142. thing (ens) itself, but the essence of the thing in the abstract."

Nevertheless, since the divine essence is "utterly complete" and

simple (simplex), "neither substance nor subsistence can add

anything" to it; that is, hypostasis, substance, and subsistence

cannot be treated as objective components of some divine

structure. It is in this sense that we are to consider Milton's

subsequent identification of the hypostasis with the subsistence

CD, V, 224. or whole being of the Father. The consistency or inconsistency of

Milton's usage is not really the point; we need to follow with

some understanding his attempts to break down the objective

associations of the inherited terms. What does seem quite clear

is his point that the Father's hypostatic essence is not something

separable from his whole being, as a mask is from a masker.

As was just hinted, Milton rejects the theological terms

"person" and "personality," though the force of common usage

CD, XIV, 422-3. makes them quite difficult to avoid entirely. Persona remains

for him a theatrical term, which he uses cautiously to mean

"any one individual being," and it would seem that his strong

etymological sense of "person" reacted against an image he could

not accept: a conception of the Father and Son as masks (personae)

through which a behind-the-scenes and thus impersonalized

divine force sounds (personat). As Paradise Lost shows, any

tendency to turn God into an impersonal numen is spiritually

perilous. "Accordingly let no one expect me to...bring into my

CD, V, 213.   argument all that play-acting of the persons of the godhead."

Substance, the essential stuff of the Athanasian trinity,

gets very little specific treatment in De Doctrina. We are told

that it cannot add anything to God's perfect essence and that

out of it God produced the Son and the Holy Spirit. God "was in

CD, V, 209; 211.   a real sense Father of the Son, whom he made of his own substance."

Not much else is said about it, and since it is a technical term

of theology, we must be very cautious about going outside

De Doctrina for help, for example, to the "Ethereal substance"

PL VI, 330.   out of which the angels are made in Paradise Lost. As we have

seen, any attempt to objectify what appear to be components of

the Godhead has demonic roots, so perhaps the incident of a

PL VI, 469-512.   Satanic ploy in that poem can be helpful. During the war in

Heaven, the devils make gunpowder out of the "materials dark and

crude" beneath the bright surface of Heaven's ground, where God's

intelligential ray informs the dark "originals of Nature" and

makes them "beauteous, op'ning to the ambient light"--an analogy,

perhaps, to the relationship between God's hypostatic essence and

his substance, which that essence informs. Thus Satan's objectifi-

cation of the heavenly stuff turns it into crude and dark

material of warfare, just as his apostasy from his own creative

principle darkens and stupefies his mind. The substance of God,

therefore, is intelligible insofar as it is both subject and object at once.

Milton uses these troublesome terms to make explicit the ways in which the unity of his God excludes the trinitarian amalgamation of Christ into the Godhead. To show in what sense the Son of God is God proves to be a much more difficult affair than to establish their hypostatic difference, because of the generic limitations of Milton's theological language. To identify Father and Son, who are different, requires the language of metaphor, which the theologian struggles to avoid except insofar as the intimate bond with scripture and its inherently ambiguous expressions *and metaphor* forces him to use it.

Take the radically patriarchial (i.e. motherless) father-son metaphor as an example. Because the Son is explicitly called the Son of God, he must at some time have been actually produced by the Father, be of an essence distinct from the Father's, and thus be subordinate to the Father. What requires attention here is the characteristic pattern of Milton's thinking, which requires that the theological metaphor be grounded in some actuality. This sense of a kernel of each scriptural metaphor we might attribute to a "literal" reading of the text, though the Latin word which Milton uses, proprius (restricted, proper), is more accurate, as he restricts his expressions as much as he can to their historical origins. As Paradise Lost shows, there is a heavenly as well as an earthly history.

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Thus the reference to the birth of the Son in Psalm 2

("You are my Son, I have begotten you today") clearly requires a

restricted sense prior to its metaphorical outgrowths. First the

Son was produced, thereafter begotten in the sense of being exalted

by the Father. This production of the Son as a separate substantial

essence was chief among the External Efficiencies of the Father,

prior to both creation and government of the universe, as it

was the first of the Internal Efficiencies by which the Son's

existence was decreed.

For Milton, "the generation of the divine nature is by no

one more sublimely or more fully explained than by the apostle

to the Hebrews, i.2,3." Given the central importance he places

on this text, we will examine Milton's conception of the Son

by means of it. Here, then, is Milton's version of the text,

to which is added the immediately foregoing and crucial clause

out of the Authorized Version:

> [God...has in these last days spoken to us
> through his own Son,] whom he has appointed heir
> of all things, through whom also he made the
> world. Who, since he is the effulgence
> (effulgentia) of his glory and the impressed
> image (character) of his subsistence, &c.

The production of the Son is figured here through the two

metaphors of the blazing forth of light and the stamped or

impressed image (Gk. charakter). Milton returns to this passage

later to emphasize the scriptural sanction of it; he comments,

"What can this imply but that God imparted to his Son as much

as he wished of the divine nature, and indeed of the divine

substance also?" Earlier he points out that this "divine nature"

is not the divine essence but image, as in II Pet. 1:4 ("that you

might be made sharers of the divine nature"); God's essence

cannot be shared. The metaphors of Heb. 1:1-3 are not developed

any further in the theology, as they are in Paradise Lost, where

the effulgentia gloriae is used with great power in the proem

of Book III: on the Son "impresst the effulgence of his Glorie

abides." It is important to note that in De Doctrina Milton

does not identify the Son with that effulgence but says that

it was impressed on him.

Because of the scriptural sanction of the metaphor of the

first born Son, it follows that "the production of Christ was

apparently a kind of 'birth' or creation." The heavenly birth

of Christ in time has also an attractive symmetry to it, in

strict accord with that powerfully condensed statement of

analogical thought in the Lord's Prayer, "on earth as it is in

Heaven." For Milton, this analogy has the advantage of directing

attention away from the cosmological toward the historical.

event and of bringing earth and heaven into a closer relation-

ship, as Raphael suggests. Milton speaks elsewhere of the body

of Truth as homogeneous and proportional; the golden rule of

theology is thus "to be still searching what we know not, by

what we know." Similarly, the use of analogy appears in Romans

1:20, which Milton cites to show the kinds of things we can

know by analogy, God's essence standing outside that analogical

bridge just as he stands outside time and space; the Son, however,

is within reach of analogy. "The Son of God was <u>the</u> <u>first</u> <u>born</u>

<u>of</u> <u>all</u> <u>created</u> <u>things</u> in the same sense as the Son of Man was the

πρωτότοκος or <u>first</u> <u>born</u> of Mary" (Matt. 1:25).

      The metaphor of the first born son (<u>primogenitus</u>) is

implicit in Heb. 1:2 (Christ as "heir of all things") as well as

in six proof-texts Milton cites to show that "the possibility of

his being co-essential with the Father and of his generation

from eternity" is excluded. For the moment I wish to stick

with the birth metaphor in the restricted sense. As Christ is

said to be "the first born of all created things" in Col. 1:15

and "the beginning of God's creation" in Rev. 3:14, it is clear

to Milton that "he was the first of the things which God created,"

suggesting strongly a part of a collective whole. (Isolated from

its context within Milton's argument this suggestion could be

misleading.) It should be noted that the metaphor of the first born

son, however strictly taken, brings with it the biblical

associations of the eldest male child whose primogeniture

includes inheritance of the father's potent blessing and his

property (cp. Jacob and Esau), with the strong metaphorical sense

that this first born son is the father, that is, the father,

after death, lives in him or acts through him. Again, Milton's

argument is in perfect accord with a strict application of the

Father-Son figure. The reference to Jacob and Esau will further

suggest the biblical theme of the passed-over eldest son, to which
we will return shortly.

Several references have already been made to Milton's
objection to the doctrine of eternal birth. First of all, he can
find no proof for such a notion: "not a scrap of real evidence for
the eternal generation of the Son can be found in the whole of

CD V, 206.   scripture." John 1:1 and other passages demonstrate "that the
Son existed before the creation of the world, but not that his
generation was from eternity." Furthermore, since there is "no
reason why we should conform to the popular belief that motion
and time, which is the measure of motion, could not, according
to our concepts of 'before' and 'after,' have existed before

CD VII, 313-14.   this world was made," the phrase "in the beginning" (in principio)
can for Milton be rendered, "in the time of beginnings," which
sense Milton understands as a different mode of time, not as a
timeless state. The way is thus left open (what theology only
permits poetry may realize). for a conception of different
rhythms of time, as in the poetry, and by that word "rhythm" a
connection with the metaphor of music is revealed, as in the
"melodious time" of the Nativity Ode. There will be occasion to
return to this extra-theological development. Milton as theologian
does touch on this idea briefly when he comments that the word
"today" in Psalm 2, for example, makes clear that the begetting

CD V, 209.   of the Son "took place within the bounds of time," i.e. that
"today" is fruitfully ambiguous: in its original and restricted

significance it refers to the Son's production, and with the

sanction of scripture, in its metaphorical senses to the Son's

CDV,206.   appointment as mediator and Christ's exaltation, which includes

CDXVI,442.   his resurrection, ascension, and glorification before the angels.

The ambiguity in "today" remains a kind of test of the hearer's

perception of time's rhythms or modes. Furthermore, it seems

clear from Milton's proof texts marshalled to define the Father's

choice of the Son for the mediatorial office that this election

CDXV,430-1. occurred at some time before the Incarnation. Out of this matrix

of possibilities, then, Milton as poet made the story of the

testing of the angels in Paradise Lost V, wherein Satan fails

to grasp the metaphor and the perception of time which lies behind

it. Again, in the theology, we note that Milton requires the

ambiguities of metaphor to be grounded in an event of heavenly

history.

Closely connected with the idea of the Son's generation in

time by a Father who exists timelessly (the first of several

discontinuous moments of epiphany) is Milton's doctrine that this

external manifestation of God's decree is a free act: "generation

has nothing to do with the essence of deity....he could not have

begotten the Son except of his own free will and as a result of

CDV,209.   his own decree." Similarly, the doctrine of the eternal generation

of the Son is linked to the notion of natural necessity. In the

words of a modern theologian, the orthodox trinitarian view

specifies that,

iBerkhof, 208 n.18.

> The generation of the Son is a necessary act
> of God. Some of the early church fathers taught
> that it was an act determined by divine volition
> and therefore free; but this would make the
> existence of the Son contingent and thus rob Him
> of his divinity. Then the Son would not be equal
> to and homoousios with the Father, for the Father
> exists necessarily, and cannot be conceived as
> non-existent. The generation of the Son must
> be regarded as a necessary and (perfectly
> natural) act of God.

Again, what Milton means by essence (ousia) is central to his

argument; by his essence the Father is what he is and is

therefore distinct from the Son. In this Miltonic sense Father

and Son could be equal, "for equality cannot exist except

CCD,V, 275. between two or more essences." What Milton is objecting to is

a non-metaphorical identification of Father and Son, and so

by "equal" Milton means a kind of metaphorical identity

tempered by the theological context. It goes almost without

saying that Milton has no intention of robbing Christ of his

divinity, but of showing the source and nature of his divine

attributes:

> Since he received all these things from the
> Father, and was in the form of God, he did
> not reckon it robbery to be equal with God,
> Philipp. ii.6, that is, because he had received
> it as a gift, not by robbery.

CD,V, 274.

The opposition of orthodox and Miltonic views exists not only

in the definitions of essence but also in what those definitions

imply. The strong impression one gets of the remoteness of the

orthodox Son in contrast to the closeness of Milton's Mediator

is profoundly significant, as will emerge in our examination

of the Incarnation.

Milton's God is eternal, without beginning or end, outside
time altogether, hypostatically unbegotten. Taking the metaphor
of the Son in the restricted sense, as referring to one who has
been begotten at some time, Milton holds that eternal generation
and the Son are mutually exclusive concepts. Assuming an eternally
generated Son won't work either, for then, being a Son, he would
have had to have been in the Father and proceeded out from him,
thereby becoming hypostatically mutable. What Milton appears to
be rejecting here is a tendency toward the dissolution of the
essential nature of the Son back into a remote Godhead.

Other consequences follow from the absence of proof for the
eternal birth of the Son and against antemundane time. "Indeed
it seems likely that the apostasy, as a result of which so many
myriads of [the angels] fled, beaten, to the lowest part of
heaven, took place before even the first beginnings of this
world." The repercussions of this possibility in Paradise Lost
do not need explication, except to note the analogical symmetry
with the Fall of man which it makes possible. The theology in a
sense leaves room for the later symbolic vision.

The metaphor of generation, as noted earlier, is also
applied by scripture to the exaltation of the Son above the
angels as king, so that generation, anointing, and election
are identified. The central texts here are Psalm 2:6-7
("anointing my king, I have set him upon my holy hill of Sion....

CD, II, 143.

CD VII, 313.

You are my Son, I have begotten you today") and Hebrews 1:2,4
("whom he has appointed heir of all things...being made more
eminent than the angels by far, by so much as his allotted name

De Doc., v, 184. is more excellent than theirs"). Milton notes that the name
"Christ" (Gk. christos) is derived from this process of anointing,
the symbolism of which resonates through the Bible in images of
potency and vitality that the infusion of spiritual seed would
suggest. Not much more is made of this theologically than to
notice that "God begot the Son in the sense of making him

ۦCD, v, 207. king," though the intimacy between De Doctrina and scripture
keeps the biblical symbolism with its resonances close at hand.
In the poetic environment of Paradise Lost the theological
kernels of God's eternal essence, the appointment to primo-
geniture, and the suggestion, noted earlier, of different
rhythms of time, combine and expand into the first epiphany of
Christ before the angels. The biblical theme of the passed-over
eldest son (Satan in Paradise Lost) becomes inevitably involved,
and is associated in De Doctrina as well as elsewhere in Milton's
work with his "vertical" perspective, expressing the necessity
of the finite mind to be open to the Infinite Mind, which "bloweth
where it listeth;" "what created mind can comprehend...the wisdom

PL iii, 705-6. infinite?" whose free act of grace is not constrained to choose
an Esau, however deserving by the standards of the flesh, but
comes upon Jacob, child of promise, whose deceit is wisdom by

αCf. CD. iv, 196-7,
ۦCD Book ii, Xiii, 763. the standards of the spirit.

Similarly, the thought-seed carried in De Doctrina by the scriptural sanction for the metaphor of annointment assimilates various resonant biblical passages into the poetic parable of Christ's commission by God before his victorious entry into the heavenly war, and his second epiphany, after the devils' rout, in Paradise Lost. The density of the poetry defies full explication here, but we may note in passing that the exaltation of the Son before battle is an infusing of virtue and grace in the forms of the water of life, the oil of gladness, and the quickening light; that the Son thus informed is the quick and piercing sword of God's Word; that the purgation of evil and the creative act which follows it each reflect the other; and that the Son's triumphal second epiphany is the prototype of the way that leads from Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm (Tree of Life) Sunday, through the cross, and to the apocalyptic marriage at the world's end.

The remaining metaphors of exaltation require us first to look into the Incarnation as it is delineated in De Doctrina, but before that is possible, we must return again to the controlling text, Heb. 1, where God is said to have "spoken to us through his Son...through whom also he made the world." The Son, in other words, is the Word of God.

One of the curiosities of Milton's scriptural text is the translation of the Greek logos by Latin sermo rather than, as in the Vulgate, verbum. The principal example is, of course,

John 1:1: "In principio erat Sermo et Sermo ille erat apud Deum, eratque ille Sermo Deus, &c." Milton is not rigorously consistent in this usage; he writes that, "Filium, verbi sive Sermonis sub nomine, in principio extitisse" (though the immediately following quotation is John 1:1, which uses _sermo_), and he uses _verbum_ in a few other places as well. Nevertheless, it seems quite clear that Milton preferred _sermo_. Quoting II Peter 3:5, "per Dei sermonem," he comments, "id est, ut aliis in locis docetur, per filium, qui hinc, ut videtur, sermo dicitur." The direct use of _logos_ (trusting to the Columbia index) occurs only once, and that by way of reply to a quotation of Zanchius, in a highly unfavorable context.

The substitution of _sermo_ for _verbum_ had, of course, been popularized in the Renaissance by Erasmus' critical edition of the New Testament, from which that editor also removed the spurious "Trinitarian phrase" found in the Authorized Version as I John 5:7. Through Mediaeval ecclesiastical tradition, _verbum_ had apparently taken on "all the overtones of consubstantiality with the Father," a trinitarian association opposed by Erasmus, Milton, and others. Furthermore, Marsilio Ficino's earlier use of _sermo_, from which Erasmus' is derived, had already begun to weaken "the whole traditional conception of Christ as the Eternal Word (_Logos_, _Verbum_) in a philosophical sense as the Mind and Instrument of God." This change "would inevitably render philosophically difficult the traditional

DeDoc.,V, 180.

DeDoc.,VII, 6.

CD, XIV, 422.

Williams, 9.

Bainton, 11.

Williams, 25.
conception of the Logos-Son as consubstantial with the Father,"
where in Milton's terms coessentiality is meant. It seems that,
as with Milton, a suspicion of "entertaining a lower view of

Bainton, 11.
Christ's person" hung about Ficino and Erasmus.

      Whatever the source, _sermo_ as the audible Word fits well
into Milton's conception of the Father and Son: "for the Word
(_Sermo_) is both Son and Christ...and as he is the image, as it
were, by which God becomes visible, so he is the Word (_Sermo_)
by which God is audible. Since this is what he is like, he

CD, VI, 297.
cannot be one in essence with an invisible and inaudible God."
Now Milton's Christ is the agent of creation: "CREATION is the
act by which GOD THE FATHER PRODUCED EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS
BY HIS WORD AND SPIRIT (_verbo_ _et_ _spiritu_ _suo_) , that is, BY HIS

CD, VII, 300.
WILL." In amplifying what he means by _verbo_ through biblical
proof-texts, Milton correlates the great creative command in
Genesis 1 with the Word of John 1, and the prophetic voice of
the Old Testament Psalms with the apostolic word of the New
Testament, thus manifesting the typological structure of the
Bible which Milton took for granted. Here he may have been
deliberate about the use of _verbum_ in Old Testament quotations
and _sermo_ in New Testament ones; what seems likely is that
whatever the word, he intends the force of _sermo_, a usage
fully justified by early patristic sources, as we will see. In
any event, the symmetry which Milton illuminates metaphorically
identifies the command of creation, the Old Testament prophetic

voice, the incarnate Word, and the New Testament voice of revelation.

Milton's independence of human tradition is well known, but in the case of _sermo_ he may well have found in early christological debate more to interest him than in the Renaissance example of Erasmus. Whether or not that kind of influence took place, it is important to allow the early usage of _sermo_ to cast light upon Milton's work. _Sermo_ as a translation for _logos_ appears in some of the earliest Latin versions of the New Testament, and there is evidence that _logos_ itself was used with the sense of _sermo_. The Latin word, connoting the active process of speech rather than the thing spoken or contemplated, indicates "the presence in Christian teaching of a doctrine of the Logos not primarily determined by Greek cosmological speculation." The speculative tradition had given rise to a philosophical conception of the Logos as a cosmological principle, or indwelling reason in the mind of God, whereas the idea manifested in _sermo_ emphasized "the continuity between Christ as the Logos and the speaking of God in the Old Testament prophets," to the Word as the divine agent of creation and revelation, or spoken word proceeding out from God. Because of the usefulness of the cosmological Logos to the early Christian apologists in their attempts to derive prior pagan wisdom from the more recent Christian source, this sense of the Word as cosmic principle prevailed in the secondary literature and became lodged in the Vulgate's _verbum_.

What we might call the active _sermo_ as opposed to the

1Pelikan,187.

1Pelikan,186-7.

Pelikan,187.

1Pelikan,31-2.

contemplative verbum manifest two contrasting imaginative states.
The latter has its apparent biblical source in the basis "for the
fullest statement of the Christian doctrine of the divine in
Christ as Logos," which is not the obvious passage from John 1

1Pelikan, 186.
but the Septuagint version of Proverbs 8:22-31. Both orthodox and
Arian theologians identified Christ with the voice of this passage;
the former read it as dealing with the relation between an

1Pelikan, 61.
eternally preexistent Logos and the Father, but in that
relationship the latter detected a subordination of the Son as
creature to his Fatherly creator, so distinct that this passage

1Pelikan, 195-6.
became the central text of Arianism. Thus both by direct
influence and by reaction, Proverbs 8 decisively shaped the

1Pelikan, 61.
doctrine of the Trinity, which thereby took on the characteristics
of the imaginative state inherited from the cosmological Logos.

By rejecting the identification of Christ with Proverbs 8,
Milton reveals an important aspect of his stand relative to both
orthodoxy and Arianism. "As for the eighth chapter of Proverbs,"
he comments in De Doctrina, "I should say that the figure
introduced is not the Son of God but a poetical personification
of Wisdom," and then, by citing Job 28:20-27, he specifies the

CD, VII, 304.
nature of this figure. Job 28 establishes Wisdom in relation to
God as natural treasure is in relation to man, thus showing Wisdom
to be symbolically female, a creaturely Daughter of God, or God's
bride at creation, not to be confused with the symbolically
male Son who is, in fact, the Bridegroom. Milton's rejection

of what he considered a false identity for Christ is also
connected with Christ's rejection of pagan wisdom in <u>Paradise
Regained</u> IV. Christ holds fast to his developing identity as the
Son of God and spurns the demonic vocation to a spiritually
passive role as pagan contemplative philosopher "led by Nature's
light." He is being tempted, to paraphrase St. Augustine liberally,
to turn his back to the true heavenly light and worship Sophia

Conf. IV, xvi, 56. thus degraded into demonic whoredom.

The crucial metaphor of the quick and piercing <u>Sermo</u>,
which we have seen in its fourfold biblical form, expanded in
Milton's poetry into the complex metaphor of music, by which
poetry, philosophical harmony, and disciplined energy are also

Frye, 47-50. meant. When applied to God, the musical metaphor thus fits his
central activity of creation, which is a purging and redemption,
whether of the cosmos or the human mind. When applied to man, this
music of enlightenment fits his answering task of purging away

Of Education, 411. "the rustick harshnesse and distemper'd passions" of his own
fallen intellect. The highest aim of human art, then, is that
of the singer's voice in <u>Ad Leonoram</u>, agent of spiritual per-
fection, justifying the music of God to man:

> serpit agens, facilisque docet mortalia corda
> sensim immortali assuescere posse sono.

ll. 7-8.

Similarly, Plato identifies this spiritual end in the Muses'
gift of intelligible harmony to man, "to assist the soul's
interior revolution, to restore it to order and concord with

Timaeus 47de, 90d. itself," thus recreating man's original nature. The classical

embodiments of this regenerative power were for Milton the

poet-musician Orpheus and the god Apollo, both conventionally

types of Christ. In Orpheus' musical <u>word</u> (and not in the music

itself) lay the restoration of the Age of Gold; in Apollo are

identified the metaphors of light, music, poetry, and medicine:

power over darkness, cacophonous stupidity, and death.

Thus the descent of the Word into the flesh is metaphorically

musical, as in the Nativity Ode, which Arthur Barker has claimed

as Milton's celebration of his own sudden enlightenment. In that

poem, one gets the ravishing resonance of nature with the cosmic

harmony, whose becoming audible identifies the creation and the

Incarnation, both of which involve a redemption or movement up-

ward on the chain of being by the infusion of a "vital virtue"

and a purgation of the "black tartareous cold infernal dregs /

Adverse to life," whether these latter be the stuff of chaos,

the oracular idols of classical belief, or the subsequent dregs

of idolatrous thought. The effect of the Word as the restoration

or enlightenment of the intellect is important to Milton's

Christology, as we will shortly discover.

"There are two parts to Christ's incarnation," Milton

wrote in <u>De Doctrina</u>, "the conception and the nativity," but

aside from his discussion of the Holy Spirit (efficient cause

of the conception) as "the power and spirit of the Father

himself" and not a separate person, Milton shows very little

interest in either conception or nativity and most certain scorn

for a philosophical curiosity about the mechanics of the mystery,
concluding that "it is best for us to be ignorant of things which

God wishes to remain secret." The same conspicuous lack of attention
to the infancy of the _sermo infans_ in the Nativity Ode seems also
to be due to a "wise ignorance" on matters quite beside the point.

Neither does the conception turn up in Milton's two senses of
"begotten:" "one literal (_proprie_), with reference to production;

the other metaphorical, with reference to exaltation." It would
seem that by denying the eternal generation of the Son and

asserting his origin in "a kind of 'birth' or creation" in time,
Milton has effectively given us a Christ _born_ in heaven but
incarnated on earth. The Incarnation is the mystery; how it
happened is unimportant.

Milton's usual antipathy to mysteries (such as the conception
or the Trinity) is revealed here to be a rejection of the false
constructs of human ingenuity and not the true mystery of faith
which he celebrates in the Incarnation: "the mystery of god-
liness (_pietatis mysterium_) is unquestionably great, God was made

manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:16). Now _pietas_ is the quality
of one who is _pius_ towards this mystery, in which "are all the
treasures of wisdom" (Col. 2:3). Through the scriptural voice of
Paul, Milton appears to be saying that the revealed mystery of
God in Christ is the gate of wisdom and self-realization, so
that we might equate the theologian's attitude here with that
of the poet's Abdiel, prototype of the Christian hero, in the

debate with Satan. Indeed, Abdiel's sect can be identified through another proof text with the "communis mysterii--in Deo" (Eph. 3:9), that pius communis created through "the riches of this glorious mystery, which is Christ" (Col. 1:26-7). Once again we have a demonstration of the potential density of scriptural language realized in Milton's structure of proof texts.

The purpose of the Incarnation is the redemption of man, "that act by which Christ, sent in the fulness of time, redeemed all believers at the price of his own blood." As before, in the question of the relation of the Son to the Father, so here also Milton is very interested in the nature of Christ. As Redeemer, Christ has a dual nature which the theologian explores first in a structure of biblical texts, then through a definition of terms. The pattern of his scriptural quotations is an alternation of reflections on the Son of God ("he who comes from above: who comes from heaven," John 3:31) and the Son of Man ("from David's loins, insofar as the flesh is concerned," Acts 2:30), a circling around the two unmitigated aspects of the incarnate God-Man in their various scriptural facets. The structure of texts is concluded with Paul's image of the resurrected Christ, "the whole fulness of the godhead dwells in him bodily" (Col. 2:9), which Milton interprets within the framework of his discussion of the Son, "that the entire fulfilment of the Father's promises resides in, but is not hypostatically united with Christ as a

man." Similarly, I Tim. 3:16 ("God made manifest in flesh") means

"in his incarnate Son, his image."

An understanding of the Incarnation and its relation to the life and death of Christ clearly depends on a prior formulation of the relation between the Son and the Father, which point Milton later makes quite explicit:

> the opinion I have advanced here about the hypostatic union [of the two natures of Christ] corroborates further the conclusion of my more lengthy discussion of the Son of God...(i.e. that the essence of the Son is not the same as the essence of the Father). For if it were the same the Son could not have coalesced in one person with man, unless the Father had also been in-cluded in the same union--unless, in fact, man had become one person with the Father as well as with the Son, which is impossible.

Both in the De Doctrina and in the history of Christian doctrine, the trinitarian question preceded and shaped the subsequent development of Christology, so that in Milton's "impossible" lies a rejection of virtually all christological speculation within the post-Nicene Church, for which "the content of the divine [the Nicene ousia] as revealed in Christ was itself regulated by the axiomatically-given definition of the deity of

God." Milton's decisive independence from traditional christologies must therefore be kept in mind throughout our examination of the nature and offices of Christ, whatever the superficial resemblances to orthodox formulas.

Nevertheless, it is helpful first to set out very briefly the positions of earliest christological debate. Beginning from the premise of a Son homoousios with the Father, two kinds

of Christology developed: that of the "hypostatic union" and that
of the "indwelling Logos," to which the name of Nestorius is
attached. This latter kind was based on "an interpretation of the
relation between the divine and the human in Jesus Christ that
sought to preserve the distinction between them by describing
their union as the indwelling of the Logos in a man whom he had

Pelikan, 251-2. assumed," neither a union according to essence nor according to
nature, but a kind of juxtaposition unique to the Incarnation,

Pelikan, 253. the precise nature of which seems unclear. Its religious intent,
however, is obvious: "to take seriously the fact of moral develop-
ment in the man Christ Jesus and thus to guarantee his status as

Pelikan, 253. simultaneously Redeemer and example," without involving "the

Pelikan, 254. divine in the suffering of the cross." A typical proof text of
this position is Col. 2:9 ("In him the fulness of the deity dwells
bodily"), and one of the cruces I Cor. 2:8 ("they crucified the
Lord of Glory"). It is interesting to note that Milton shared
the religious intent of the "indwelling Logos" theology and to
observe in what follows how he fulfilled it.

The "hypostatic union" theology received its blessing
(as Nestorius his condemnation) in the reaffirmation of the

Pelikan, 260. Nicene Creed as a christological formula at Ephesus in 431.
Its starting point was apparently John 1:14 ("And the Word became
flesh"), out of which arose two problems: the precise relation
between the Word and the flesh, and the word "became" itself,
as the Word was axiomatically immutable. To the latter recurrent

enigma Milton consistently applies "wise ignorance." This
Christology ran into trouble with biblical passages showing growth
and development, such as Luke 2:52 ("And Jesus increased in wisdom
and stature"), since its overriding concern was for the indivisible
unity of the incarnate Son (another concern Milton shared). The
problem of the union was taken up by the Council of Chalcedon in
451, which formulated a doctrine of two distinct, unconfused

Hunter, "Milton on the Incarnation," 132.

natures concurring in the person and hypostasis of Christ. This
formula became general dogma and is the ancestor of what Milton
calls "the orthodox position."

His version of the "hypostatic union" orthodoxy states that
"two natures are so constituted in the one person of Christ, that
the true and perfect one subsists without his own subsistence in

DeDoc.XIV, 264-6.

the other nature," which means that the hypostasis (or person)
and nature of the Word took on human nature without a human

CD, XIV, 422.

hypostasis, i.e. "it assumed human nature, but not manhood." Hooker
makes plain the consequences of this structure for Anglican
orthodoxy:

> It pleased not the Word or wisdom of God to
> take to itself some one person amongst men,
> for then should that one have been advanced
> which was assumed and no more, but Wisdom to
> the end she might save many built her house of
> that nature which is common unto all, she made
> not this or that man her habitation, but dwelt
> in us.

Hooker, V, lii, 3.

What follows, then, is a kind of transformation of human nature
independent of the achievement of any one man. For Milton,

however, human nature is a logical abstraction, "the form of man contained in the flesh" that must "at the very moment when it comes into existence, bring a man into existence too, and a whole man, with no part of his essence or his subsistence...or his personality

CD, XIV, 422.

missing." The orthodox position, therefore, is to him plainly absurd.

The structure of Milton's incarnate Son is impossible to conceive satisfactorily in objective terms. Again, the theologian's use of terms becomes difficult to follow, as he works to break down the subject-object gulf between man and God, in imitation of the union perfectly realized in the Incarnation itself: "the mutual hypostatic union of two natures or, in other words, of two essences, of two substances, and consequently of two persons," whose properties remain "individually distinct,"

CD, XIV, 423-4.

although the union produces "one Christ, one ens, and one person." Milton resolutely and on principle refuses to be any more specific. He does say, however, that this difficult conception is summed up most fitly (aptissime) by the Greek word θεάνθρωπος, not "God and Man" or "God-Man," which are both, in the words of Dr. Johnson, expressions of "the most heterogeneous ideas...yoked by violence

Johnson, 14.

together," but θεάνθρωπος, one seamless being who is both one and two. Once again, Milton must move into metaphor to catch the image.

William B. Hunter has suggested that one way to get close to what Milton meant by this union is to consider other images of

Hunter, "Milton on
the Incarnation."
138-42.

union in Milton's work, the closest of which would seem to be the

"true beseeming Mariage...which is the neerest resemblance of our

Tetra.,606.

union with Christ." This is the paradisal view of marriage, in which, as in the Song of Songs, the black bride from the foreign land is brought up into the heavenly palace of the wise king. The ascent of man and the descent of the Word thus conjoin.

Several consequences flow from the hypostatic union in Milton's Christ. We need to recall that his Father and Son are not coessential, that the Son is a derivative being, and so a large part of the raison d'être for the exclusion of real and individualized humanity from the Incarnation doesn't exist for him. Since this Incarnation involved one man only, the union of the elect with the resurrected Christ is accomplished by each individual, not by some commonly held substance, "the nature

Hooker, V, lii, 13.

whereof we consist." This direct relationship between each individual and the Word would seem to suggest Milton's anti-pathy to the visible autonomous Church containing the Word within it, and might suggest something more like the mystical church. Furthermore, such an incarnate Christ, having emptied himself, could "increase in wisdom" (Luke 2:52), that is, become what he already is, as he does so movingly in Paradise Regained, with a real sense of discovery and peril. Having been fully tempted as man, "since he himself suffered with patience when he was tempted, he is able to come to the help of those who are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). Thus, "we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our weaknesses" (Heb. 4:15)...

"who is sufficiently able to have compassion on the ignorant and
the wayward, because he is himself enclosed in weakness" (Heb. 5:2).
Milton's concurrence with this biblical author's derivation of
Christ's compassion from his suffering as a man sheds some light
on why the tone of the Son's speech in Paradise Lost III is so
dry and austere (despite all the "breath'd immortal love" claimed
for the speaker), and why Christ in Paradise Regained, but yet
begun in his ministry, has that similar astringent quality.
Lastly, I would like to suggest that a Christ such as Milton
perceives is a mediator in a very complete sense, as he stands
in relation to God analogously as man stands in relation to him.

CD,XIV,427.

Milton goes to some lengths to show in what sense the
Son is equal to the Father in his argument that,

> the name attributes, and works of God, and the
> divine office itself, are habitually attributed
> to the Son...in such a way that they are easily
> understood to be attributable, in their primary
> and proper sense, to the Father alone, and that
> the Son admits he possesses whatever measure of
> deity is attributed to him, by virtue of the
> peculiar gift and kindness of the Father, as the
> apostles also testify.

CD,V,223.

Following upon the suggestion of Christ the Mediator as an
analogical door between God and Man, two particular places in
Milton's lengthy argument, while they are employed to discriminate
the Son from the Father, indicate rather strongly the closeness
of the relationship between Milton's God the Father, the Son,
and man.

When, for example, according to Milton's typological

reading of the Old Testament, Christ is clearly called Jehovah,
as in Isa. 8:13-14, "we should remember that this is not his own

name but the name of Jehovah who is in him." The question is, in
what sense are we to understand "in him"? We have already met two
metaphors in Heb. 1:1-3, in which the Son appears as the blazing
forth of the Father's glory and as the impressed image of his
subsistence. The light-bridge is metaphorically identical to
Jacob's ladder, which goes both ways, up and down: God "regards the
things which the Jews are going to do to his Son as if they

were offenses against himself" ("him who disobeyes / Mee disobeyes"),
and "In the same way the Son says that what is done to those who
believe in him, is done to him," as in Matt. 25:40. Such a connection
is only manifest, however, in what is called the "Kingdom of
Heaven," or at the Last Judgment, or in the visionary condition
which John calls being "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10).
In other words, this connection must be understood metaphorically.
As noted before, metaphor as such belongs to the realm of poetry
and not properly to theology, but since De Doctrina is so
thoroughly interpenetrated with the simple, parabolic language
of scripture, Milton's theology constantly appears either on the
brink of metaphorical expression or in a struggle to ground the
ambiguous words he must use in a restricted sense. Theological
language must discriminate, while the metaphor identifies. Thus
the theologian nears poetic territory when, in his exegesis of
Col. 2:9 ("the whole fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily")

in conjunction with Eph. 3:19 ("that you may be filled with all
God's fulness"), he writes that "Christ has received his fulness

from God just as we shall receive ours from Christ," though he

takes his usual pains to establish again the differences involved.
In De Doctrina the metaphorical identification of man with Christ,
and Christ with the Father, is the mystic union discussed in
John 14:20, which quotation heads a dense paragraph of proof-texts:
"on that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me,

and I in you." The identification of each individual with Christ,
considered as a process, is called "COMMUNION," from which arises
"THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS," constituting "that mystic body,

"THE INVISIBLE CHURCH." Significantly for Milton's conception of
the "hypostatic union" of the θεάνθρωπος, the bond of love between
Christ and this invisible church is "figured as the love of

husband for wife," which would suggest once again that Christ
θεάνθρωπος is a microcosm of the apocalyptic marriage, through

which "God shall be all in all" in Christ, "reconciling the world

to himself" (II Cor. 5:19).

The nature of the office of mediator, Milton says, becomes
apparent through the conjunction of Acts 7:38 ("this is he who
has received the living words to pass on to us") and Deut. 5:5
("when I was standing between Jehovah and you to pass the word of

Jehovah on to you"), from which comes the image of the Word passing
on the Word, that is, the active, symbolically male sense implicit
in sermo, at work in the redemptive act of creation, the enlightenment

of darkness. The first or prophetic function of the three-fold

mediatorial office has just this emphasis: "TO EDUCATE HIS CHURCH

CD, XV, 432. IN HEAVENLY TRUTH AND TO TEACH THE WHOLE WILL OF HIS FATHER."

This function began "at the very beginning of the world"

(the theological basis for the Son offering himself for fallen

PL III, 143ff. man, which parable gives us some idea of the dimensions of the

Miltonic educator) and "will continue...until the end of the

CD, XV, 433. world." The prophetic function has two parts: "one external

and one internal. The first is the revelation of divine truth,

CD, XV, 432. the second the illumination of the mind." The former part has

taken the external forms of prophecy and the Incarnation and

continues in the external revelatory word of God, all of which

forms the central divine activity of creation. The incandescent

internal part is what is meant by "that prophetic spirit of

CD, XV, 433. Christ within" (I Pet. 1:11), that which "was the true light,

CD, XV, 432. which gives light to every man who comes into the world" (John

1:9). One aspect of this illuminatory function of the mediator

is specified in Luke 10:22 ("no one knows who the Father is,

except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal

CD, XV, 432. him"), by which it is possible to understand more thoroughly

than otherwise why the poetic presentation of God in Paradise

Lost should be directly preceded by that masque-like effulgence

of "holy Light, offspring of Heav'n first-born," which salutation

modulates into a prayer from a darkened, chaotic, fallen mind

asking to be illuminated and have its mists purged away. In

the Nativity Ode the burning coal of Isaiah is the agent of
purification. In both poems the poet becomes an educator-poet-
prophet in the highest human sense, though theologically inferior
to his archetype, Christ.

The priestly function of the mediatorial office Milton places
"in the order of Melchisedek" (Ps. 110:4), quoting the argument
in Hebrews that links Christ to a order of priesthood superior
to the Levitical and their Law. Melchisedek, prototype of Christ,
is also the biblical figure in which king and priest are united,
as is true for Milton only of Christ. This priest "once offered
CD,XV,433-4.   himself to God the Father as a sacrifice for sinners," that is,
as θεάνθρωπος, having "emptied himself" (Philipp. 2:6-7)--a
metaphor for the Incarnation, in which the Son took on "the form
of a servant." Having in mind what Milton means by the "hypostatic
union," we can understand the significance of his emphasis
(though it is not sharp, as the union is not a juxtaposition)
"that it was especially in his human nature that he offered
CD,XV,434.   himself." Here the theologian seems to be guarding against any
lingering suspicion that Christ did not suffer as a real man,
"in the body of his flesh, through death" (Col. 1:22). A full
participation in human life is central to Milton's mediatorial
θεάνθρωπος.

What seems most important about the kingly function is that
this king legislates through internal law and conquers by spiritual
weapons. Christ as king, then, precipitates the internalization

or incarnation of "a free and spiritual law" in the worshipper
and the externalization or casting-off of "the law of flesh

CD,XV,436.   and of bondage." He commands "not only the body, as a civil
magistrate does, but above all he rules the mind and the con-
science." The idea of spiritual weapons returns us once again
to the image of the quick and piercing _Sermo_, which both slays
and resurrects.

The three aspects of mediation--prophetic, priestly, and
kingly--become actualized through Christ's humiliation and his
subsequent exaltation. The Incarnation itself, as noted earlier,
is a humiliation, the kenosis or emptying of glory and assumption
of "the form of a servant." As the poet says in the Nativity Ode,
the Son "forsook the Courts of everlasting Day, / And chose
with us a darksome house of mortal Clay." The mediatorial
humiliation is an agon or suffering and so is equated with Christ's
Passion, and here Milton's conception of the derivative Son is
most crucial. Thus he comments on Luke 22:43 ("an angel from
heaven appeared to him, strengthening him"): "What need would

CD,XVI,439;   there be of an angel unless both Christ's natures were suffering?"
cp. CD,V,269-70.   Furthermore, both Christ's natures die. In his discussion of

CD,XIII   the death of the body, Milton works out what is technically called

cp. M.Kelley,91ff. a doctrine of thnetopsychism (lit. "soul death"), which means that

CD,XIII,400.   "the whole man dies," including body, spirit, and soul, and that
at the appointed hour the whole is resurrected. "Thus even Christ's
soul succumbed to death for a short time when he died for our

CD,XIII,405
CD,XVI,439

sins...the grave held him for three days after death." Milton
simply could not accept the extra-biblical conception of a soul
that parts from its body after death and flies off to a heavenly
rest-stop. One can see the strength of Milton's mind in his

OCD,XVI,440.

statement that "Christ, the sacrificial lamb, was totally killed;"
Milton's Christ faced what all men face without any heavenly
escape clauses, proving thereby a true exemplar, while at the
same time his divine aspect allowed him to seek death "in our

ICD,XVI,444.

place and for the sake of redemption," and not merely as an
example.

Both the strength of Milton's dependence on the scriptural
text and the integral nature of Christ's total death to the
whole of his christology are shown in his attitude towards the
apocryphal story of the Harrowing of Hell, "that peevish con-

CD,XVI,439.

troversy...which has teased the minds of theologians so much."
He had another way of expressing the essential significance of
that incident without relying on what he regarded as a questionable
source. Since he interpreted baptism as "a symbol for Christ's
painful life, his death and his burial, in which he was, so to

CD,XXVIII,550.

speak, immersed for a time," and since in the synoptic gospels
the temptation in the wilderness follows immediately upon
the baptism, Milton made the dialogue with Satan in the wilderness

Frye, 121.

represent the perilous struggle against the whole might of Hell.
Given the nature of Milton's Christ, this battle was of no
certain outcome.

Earlier we saw that Christ's resurrection from the dead constitutes one of the moments of epiphany contained in that metaphor "today" of Psalm 2, as Paul interprets it in Acts 13:32-3. Now, this metaphorical begetting or exaltation of Christ, "like his emptying of himself, applies to both his natures. It applies to his divine nature by virtue of that nature's restitution and manifestation, and it applies to his human nature by virtue

CCD,XVI,443. of its accession." Here again the subtlety of Milton's handling of scripture can be observed: through three quotations he presents the resurrection of the divine being, John 17:5 ("now glorify me, Father, with your own self, with the glory which I had with you before the world was"); of the human one, Acts 13:32-3 ("having raised up Jesus, as indeed it is written in the second Psalm, you are my Son, I have begotten you today"); and of the θεάνθρωπος who is both, Rom. 1:4 ("revealed as [or] defined as the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"). Milton's dual translation of the Greek ὁρισθέντος in the last quotation, from ὁρίζω (with reference to a god, "determine to be a god, deify"), reflects the very ambiguity the theologian strives to resolve.

The full meaning of the exaltation of Milton's Christ turns on the kenosis in yet another way. We are told that the purpose of the exaltation was "for our good, by virtue partly of his

CD,XVI,440-1. own merit and partly of the Father's gift;" that is, he worked

for it and earned it, though he would not have got it without
God's free grace. Now the whole pattern of Christ's life, Milton
insists, reveals that he was "formed like flesh, liable to sin"
CD,XVI,438-9. (Romans 8:3), that he had emptied himself of his glory in being so
formed, and that he took on this painful life "especially in his
CD,XV,434. human nature." The possibility of earning his resurrection, therefore,
is connected with that aspect of human nature in which "some
traces of the divine image still remain...which are not wholly
CD,XII,396. extinguished by this spiritual death." Such an extinction is a
lapsarian precondition of corporeal existence which involves
the loss of right reason, the extinction of righteousness and
liberty, the slavish subjection to sin, and the death of the
CD,XII,394-5. spiritual life, all of which bondage Christ overthrows from within
by discovering his own "traces of the divine image." The fact
that Christ in his human aspect shares this freedom with man,
however vestigial it may be, to act in the genuine sense, is
theologically based on Milton's doctrine of the contingent
decrees of God: "we must conclude," he insists at length, "that
God made no absolute decrees about anything which he has left in
CD,III,155. the power of men, for men have freedom of action," though, he
soberly admits later, this vestige of freedom "is so weak and
of such little moment, that it only takes away any excuse we
CD,XII,396. might have for doing nothing." This operation of human freedom
in the process of salvation has been called Milton's Arminianism,
a doctrinal tendency named after the Seventeenth Century Dutch

M.Kelley, 74-86. minister James Arminius; it is equally possible, however, to hear directly the echoes of the fifth century debate between Augustine and Pelagius.

There are two aims of the mediatorial ministry: "satisfaction of divine justice on behalf of all men," that is, "fulfilling the law and paying the just price," and "shaping of the faithful

CD,XVI,443. in the image of Christ." By paying the price, Milton argues, scripture plainly means the substitution of Christ for man, which proof refutes those "who maintain that Christ sought death...

CD,XVI,444. only for our good and in order to set an example," that is, the Socinians and the like, who deny Christ's divinity. Forgetting that this filial divinity is not coessential with the Father's equally denies the substitution by rendering it impossible. Milton never really explains the bloody kernel of this metaphor of the sacrificial victim (perhaps there is no need, since that symbolism is so thoroughly a part of scripture), but a clarification is at least implicit in his conception of the hypostatic union as a

PL,III,284. microcosm of reconciliation, "made flesh, when time shall be:"

CD,XIV,417. "Christ, sent in the fulness of time," in whom all things are collected together, "both the things in heaven and the things on earth" (Eph. 1:10). Recall now the idea of different rhythms of time implicit in the theology, and the notion of evil as a premature or ill-timed pseudo-act that one gets throughout Milton's work. All genuine action in Milton's sense is metaphorically musical, disciplined and therefore free, moving according to

the "melodious time" mentioned in the Nativity Ode. As the

opposed images of the gates of Heaven and Hell suggest, such

action takes place in the plenitude or perfection of the right

moment. Milton explains his sense of the perfect moment in

human history by reference to Eph. 1:10 in conjunction with

CD,XIV,417. Gal. 4:4, where Paul concludes his parable of the heir, in the

bondage of his own immaturity, liberated at "the time appointed

of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage

under the elements of the world: But when the fulness of time

was come, God sent forth his Son...that we might receive the

adoption of sons." From this perfect moment of the maturity of

man and by the grace of God comes what Milton calls "CHRISTIAN

LIBERTY." By this somewhat circuitous and extra-theological

route, we can perhaps better understand in what sense Milton's

θεἀνθρωπος, containing all things at the right moment and thus

substituted for man, pays the price.

CD,XII,396. Since all men carry "some traces of the divine image" and

CD,XVI,445. not just the Elect, "Christ was given for the whole world."

After considerable emphasis on this point, Milton returns to

the theme of the compassionate Christ, John 3:17: "God did not

send his Son into the world to condemn the world" (this is the

direct implication of the condemning doctrine of the Elect to

which Milton is opposed), "but that the world might be saved

CD,XVI,447. through him." The question for this theologian, then, is one of

each man's acceptance or rejection of what is freely proffered

if (we may add) he is attuned to the moment of grace when it

<u>freely</u> happens.

This offering of grace leads us to the second aim of the

mediatorial ministry, "TO SHAPE US IN CHRIST'S IMAGE, BOTH CHRIST

EMPTIED OF GLORY AND CHRIST EXALTED." Earlier Milton argues with

CCD,XVI,450.

Paul in II Cor. 5:14, "that if one died for all, then surely all

were dead," that is, all men died with Christ, from which follows

the converse, "then he died for all who were dead, that is, for

CD,XVI,445.

everyone." Here the image to which the participant is conformed

is "Christ emptied of glory," Christ as suffering Θεάνθρωπος

whose passion was a death to sin on behalf of all who were

spiritually dead, that is, everyone. Thus Milton uses such proof

texts as Romans 6:4 ("therefore we are buried [with him by

baptism into death]"), and Gal. 2:20 ("crucified together with

Christ"). In Milton's vision, Christ Θεάνθρωπος, emptied of

glory, is the true nature of man in this life. "So if we are

mindful of Christ's satisfaction, and of the fact that we are

shaped in the image of Christ emptied of glory, then the restor-

CD,XVI,450-1.

ation of man is a matter of desert." The image for man restored

is Christ exalted, by which Milton ultimately means the resurrection

from the dead, John 12:32 ("and I, if I am lifted up from the

earth, will draw all men to me").

The reader may recall that the restoration of man in the

De <u>Doctrina</u> consists first of the redemption of man by Christ

and then his renovation, by which "he is brought to a state of

grace after being cursed and subject to God's anger." "Renovation
takes place either naturally or supernaturally," the natural kind
affecting only the natural man and accomplished by God through
a calling or vocation to knowledge of how to "walk always in my
sight and be perfect" (Gen. 17:1). This calling occurs either
generally, to all men, or specially, to certain individuals, and
its effect is a partial renewal of the mind and will of the natural
man, by which "God gives us the power to act freely, which we have
not been able to do since the fall unless called and restored."

Supernatural renovation is a process called "REGENERATION
and INGRAFTING IN CHRIST." It is the latter of these two forms
that I wish to focus attention on as a means of concluding this
examination of Milton's Christology. The "ingrafting" has directly
to do with the nature of Milton's Christ, whereas regeneration is
a Fatherly act, by which the old man (Adam within) is destroyed
and the inner man regenerated, "so that his whole mind is restored
to the image of God, as if he were a new creature." The mediatorial
agency only seems to disappear in this context because Milton
is focusing on the immediate act of God by which repentance
is triggered and faith implanted, rather than the mediating process
of ingrafting onto and pruning the timely vine.

The last great image of the relationship between man,
Christ, and God in Milton's De Doctrina with which I wish to deal
is that of God the Father in the archetypal human occupation of
husbandman or farmer, nurturing the wheat and the fruitful boughs,

CDD, XVII, 453.

CDD, XVII, 457.

CDD, XVIII, 461.

CCD, XVIII, 461.

and rooting out the tares and pruning away the sterile branches:
Matt. 15:13, "every plant which my heavenly Father has not
planted will be rooted out;" John 15:1-2, "I am the true vine,
my Father is the farmer. Every branch in me which does not bear
fruit, he removes." The metaphoric relationship between God and
man is a living one, and Christ is the organic connection.
Inherent in the Biblical symbolism of the husbandman and the
fruitful soil is the sexual metaphor, which in this context
brings God the farmer and Christ his vine and man his fruitful
bough into so close a bond that the whole image well qualifies
to illuminate Milton's conception of the organic chain of spiritual
being.

Milton remains within the metaphor: "The effects which this
ingrafting produces, when combined with regeneration, are NEW
LIFE and GROWTH." This new life (note that it _follows_ upon
ingrafting and regeneration) consists in living "to God," which
means to live in imitation of Christ, "that the life of Jesus may
be made manifest in our body" (II Cor. 4:10). For Milton this
imitation is a process of identification with our own true
nature, a kind of eucharistic internalization of the historical
Christ, as in another of his texts, Gal. 2:20: "[I am crucified
with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but] Christ lives
in me." Paul's "not I" implies the death of the self, Col. 3:3
("[For ye are dead, and] your life is hidden with Christ in God,"
as Milton notes: "This is also called self-denial."

CD, XXI, 477.

CD, XXI, 477.

CD, XXI, 477.
Note 7.

CD, XXI, 478.

This new life "in the spirit" is manifested by a nearly complete restoration of the intellect to its original clarity and power. The internal imitative discipline of this new life brings about an experience analogous to the descent of the creative Word into chaos or into the flesh, involving a purging or dispersal of the darkness of native ignorance and the organization of life energy into the form of a _habitus_ through which the worshipper, instructed by God, comes to know "everything necessary for eternal salvation and for a truly blessed life." Just as this "understanding of spiritual affairs" is expressed in the symbolism of the potent light, which the ingrafted branch requires, so the other effect of the new life takes on the symbolic modality of the water of life, or the sap of the vine of life. Thus we are told that Charity is the response of the ingrafted branch to "a sense of the divine love which is poured into the hearts of the regenerate through the spirit," and that this charity so affects "those who are implanted...that they become dead to sin and alive again to God, and bring forth good works freely." Thus Gal. 5:22: "the fruit of the spirit is charity." The image of the fruitful bough, ingrafted in Christ and nurtured by God in the forms of the husbandman, the potent intelligential light, and the water of life structures Milton's theology on the most fundamental level, as the theology is within the mythological framework of the Bible and its intimacy with the language of scripture is as close as Milton could manage.

C.D.,XXI,478.

C.D.,XXI,479.

C.D.,XXI,479.
C.D.,XXI,480.

Along with the state of new life comes the process of growth, the same organic metaphor continuing in the vinedressing Father: John 15:2 ("and every branch which bears fruit he purges, so that

it may bring forth more fruit.") God acts, the vine responds. Milton is keen to avoid the implication of a totally passive role for the ingrafted ones, whose "spiritual growth, unlike physical growth, seems to be to some extent within the power of the regenerate

themselves." Thus the liberated human will cooperates with the Father's grace to achieve, like the Son, an earned election, through its life according to the vision of charity. "As for perfection, although it is not to be hoped for in this life, we ought nevertheless to struggle and strive towards perfection as

our ultimate goal." This asymptotic course or redemptive movement up the chain of being is an evolutionary growth in disciplined freedom, Eph. 4:15: "behaving ourselves sincerely with charity, we may truly grow into him who is the head, Christ." "So from the

root," Milton envisions in Paradise Lost, "Springs lighter the

green stalk," and as in Eve's paradisal nursery, where the plants "at her coming sprung / And toucht by her fair tendance gladlier

grew," so in the regenerate state man interpenetrates with God.

There is value to wondering why such a visionary conclusion seems so out of place in a theological study. Arthur Barker's question, with which I began the essay, is essentially a sharper form of that puzzlement. One answer is that what animated the formulas of theology for Milton was just this symbolic vision

to which Milton as poet returned. _De Doctrina_ permits only the kernels and thought-seeds, the dry potential of what is permitted and approved by the parables and visions of scripture. Perhaps this sense of _De Doctrina_ containing something far greater than itself that struggles to be free from confines not natural to its origins suggests also the condition of man in "this life" of bondage to Law. Perhaps as Law gives way to its fulfilment in the Gospel, so Milton's Christian doctrine is overthrown by its realization in the poetic vision. Was not Spenser a better teacher than Aquinas?

Notes

1. All quotations from the Bible are taken as they appear in
   Carey's translation of De Doctrina or directly from the
   Latin text, unless otherwise noted. One of the serious dis-
   advantages of Bishop Sumner's translation is that he adopted
   the text of the Authorized Version instead of rendering the
   Latin accurately. On the rare occasions when I thought Carey's
   version flawed, I have translated the passages myself. For
   an analysis of the Sumner version see John Carey's discussion
   in Volume VI of the Yale edition.

2. All English quotations are from the Carey translation
   unless otherwise noted. These are designated by the marginal
   CD, followed by the chapter reference, followed by the page
   number in Volume VI of the Yale edition. English quotations
   not from Carey I have translated; these are designated by
   the marginal De Doc., followed by the chapter reference,
   followed by the page number of the Latin text in the
   appropriate volume of the Columbia edition.

3. The reader should beware of the Sumner translation whenever
   these terms are involved, since he was inconsistent in his
   rendering of them into English.

4. MacMullen's portrait of the "Procrustean concord of Nicaea"
   under the domination of a powerful but anti-intellectual and
   scripturally illiterate secular prince shows just the kind
   of domination and perversion of religion by politics that
   Milton opposed. MacMullen demonstrates that what might have
   been a meeting of minds (had it been otherwise thought necessary
   at all) was transformed into a power struggle exacerbated by
   the weapon of excommunication which Constantine wielded.
   The insertion of homoousios into the Creed was Constantine's
   doing. As for the original Arian position, "What escaped
   oblivion, memory bent to partisan purposes" (171).

5. Milton could be classed as a "subordinationist," but I think
   very little is to be gained (and perhaps much to be confused)
   by applying such crude labels to a very complex statement of
   belief.

6. This creative purgation seems to me to be at the core of what
   Milton means by catharsis, which I am tempted to look at
   through Plato's conception, as, for example, in the Phaedo
   (67de) and the Phaedrus (279bc).

7. Milton's text reads, "<u>vixit</u> in me Christus," and so Carey translates it as "Christ <u>lived</u> in me." Elsewhere, I think the only other citation of this passage, Milton quotes correctly, "vivit in me Christus" (De Doc., XVI, 332). I cannot find any explanation for Milton's use of the past tense other than to suppose a copyist's error, as the tense change destroys the meaning of Paul's statement.

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I have read this paper with great interest and think it an excellent study of Milton's Christology. I don't know that I have much to say about it, as it has covered the situation at first hand very adequately. It seems to me that the doctrine of the Trinity was the main intellectual instrument by which the Church was enabled to transform the Bible into a mirror of church doctrine. Its convention then became, as Newman said, not to teach doctrine but to prove it. Milton, of course, was trying to shake the Bible loose from all ecclesiastical domination, whether Catholic or Protestant, and so he shows a superficial resemblance to Arian and similar movements. But I think the real thrust of the Christian Doctrine is towards a conception of Christianity in which, as in, for example, Kierkegaard, the personal is primary and the personality of Christ needs to be, so to speak, liberated from the Trinity. However, perhaps that's what your title means, in which case you have already made the point.